***Draft* Supplemental Environmental Assessment**

2015

Infrastructure Improvements at Camp Billy Machen

Prepared for:
Marine Corps Air Station Yuma

Prepared by:
Naval Facilities Engineering Command Southwest

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Summary

The U.S. Marine Corps (USMC) has prepared this Supplemental Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended (42 United States Code §§ 4321-4370h), as implemented by the Council on Environmental Quality regulations (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Parts 1500-1508); U.S. Department of the Navy (Navy) procedures for implementing NEPA (32 CFR Part 775); and Marine Corps Order P5090.2A, Change 3, dated 26 August 2013, *Environmental Compliance and Protection Manual.*

In 2012, the Navy proposed various infrastructure improvements at the Camp Billy Machen Desert Warfare Training Facility. Camp Billy Machen is operated by Naval Special Warfare Comment and supports training of special operations forces. Camp Billy Machen is located in the Special Warfare Training Area, in the Chocolate Mountain Aerial Gunnery Range (CMAGR), near Niland, in Imperial County, California. The project would improve the quality of life for personnel and provide sufficient instructional space, materials handling and material preparation facilities, and berthing. This would result in increased efficiencies and associated improvement in logistics, training, and ultimately, special operations forces readiness and operations. The USMC, through Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Yuma, manages the CMAGR, and was therefore the lead agency on the Environmental Assessment (EA) prepared for the project. Based on the evaluation presented in the Final EA, the Commanding Officer of MCAS Yuma issued a Finding of No Significant Impact in April 2012, which stated that "the preferred alternative will have no significant impact on the human environment."

During the final design of the project and subsequent coordination with the Imperial Irrigation District, the electrical utility provider for Camp Billy Machen, it was determined that the existing electrical circuit would be insufficient to provide the additional capacity needed for the improvements proposed in the 2012 EA. Therefore, this SEA supplements the 2012 EA by evaluating potential impacts related to the required extension of the existing electrical circuit that supplies electricity to Camp Billy Machen, which was not previously included in the 2012 EA.

The SEA analyzes two alternatives: the Proposed Action (Alternative 1), which is to provide a 2.8 mile (4.5 kilometer) extension of Circuit P63 on an existing overhead electrical line; and the No Action Alternative (Alternative 2), and considers the potential environmental effects of each alternative on the following resources: biological resources and cultural resources. No significant impacts to either resource would occur with implementation of the Proposed Action. Avoidance and minimization measures are proposed.

After a public notification, this supplement to the 2012 EA will be finalized.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

Acronym/Abbreviation	Definition
ac	Acres
APE	Area of Potential Effect
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CMAGR	Chocolate Mountain Aerial Gunnery Range
EA	Environmental Assessment
ESA	Endangered Species Act
EO	Executive Order
DoD	Department of Defense
FONSI	Finding of No Significant Impact
ft	foot/feet
GHG	greenhouse gas
ha	hectare
ICAPCD	Imperial County Air Pollution Control District
IID	Imperial Irrigation District
km	kilometer
kV	kilovolt
m	meter
MBTA	Migratory Bird Treaty Act
MCAS	Marine Corps Air Station
mi	mile
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
Navy	U.S. Department of the Navy
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
SEA	Supplemental Environmental Assessment
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Officer
SWAT	Special Warfare Training Area
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
USMC	U.S. Marine Corps

Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

1.1 Type of Environmental Document

This Supplemental EA (SEA) is a supplement to the April 2012 Environmental Assessment (EA) for P-771 Proposed Infrastructure Improvements at the Camp Billy Machen Desert Warfare Training Facility (U.S. Marine Corps [USMC] 2012a). The overall Proposed Action evaluated in the 2012 EA is essentially unchanged. This SEA contains updated information and analysis for additional work proposed outside the original project footprint evaluated in the 2012 EA.

This SEA has been prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (42 United States Code §§4321-4370h), as implemented by the Council on Environmental Quality (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Parts 1500-1508); U.S. Department of the Navy (Navy) procedures for implementing NEPA (32 CFR Part 775); and Marine Corps Order P5090.2A, Change 3, dated August 2013, *Environmental Compliance and Protection Manual*, which establishes USMC procedures for implementing NEPA.

1.2 Project Background

The Navy proposes various infrastructure improvements at the Camp Billy Machen Desert Warfare Training Facility. Camp Billy Machen is operated by Naval Special Warfare Commend and supports training of special operations forces. Camp Billy Machen is located in the Special Warfare Training Area (SWAT) of the Chocolate Mountain Aerial Gunnery Range (CMAGR), near Niland, in Imperial County, California (Figure 1.1). The project would improve the quality of life for personnel and provide sufficient instructional space, materials handling and material preparation facilities, and berthing. The project would result in increased efficiencies and associated improvement in logistics, training, and ultimately, special operations forces readiness and operations.

The existing infrastructure at Camp Billy Machen lacks required classrooms, instructional space, utilities, and operational gear storage for the current throughput of personnel. Furthermore, billeting is non-standard and there is a lack of adequate materials handling and preparation space. This lack of required facilities adversely impacts logistics, training, and ultimately, special operations forces readiness and operations. The purpose of the project is to provide required classrooms, berthing, instructional space, utilities, operational gear storage, and materials handling and preparation spaces at Camp Billy Machen. The project is needed to provide adequate infrastructure to support on-going military training.

Under the proposed project, the Navy would implement facility improvements and associated electrical upgrades to support on-going military training as currently performed. Implementation of the project would improve the quality of life for personnel and provide sufficient instructional space, materials handling and material preparation facilities, and berthing. This would result in increased efficiencies and associated improvement in logistics, training, and ultimately, special operations forces readiness and operations.

Not until final design of the project and subsequent coordination with the Imperial Irrigation District, the electrical utility provider for Camp Billy Machen, was it was determined that the existing electrical circuit is insufficient to provide the additional capacity for the improvements proposed in the 2012 EA. To

provide the additional capacity, upgrades along a 2.8-mile [mi] (4.5-kilometer [km]) segment of an existing overhead electrical line would be required. This upgrade was not included as part of the Proposed Action in the 2012 EA.

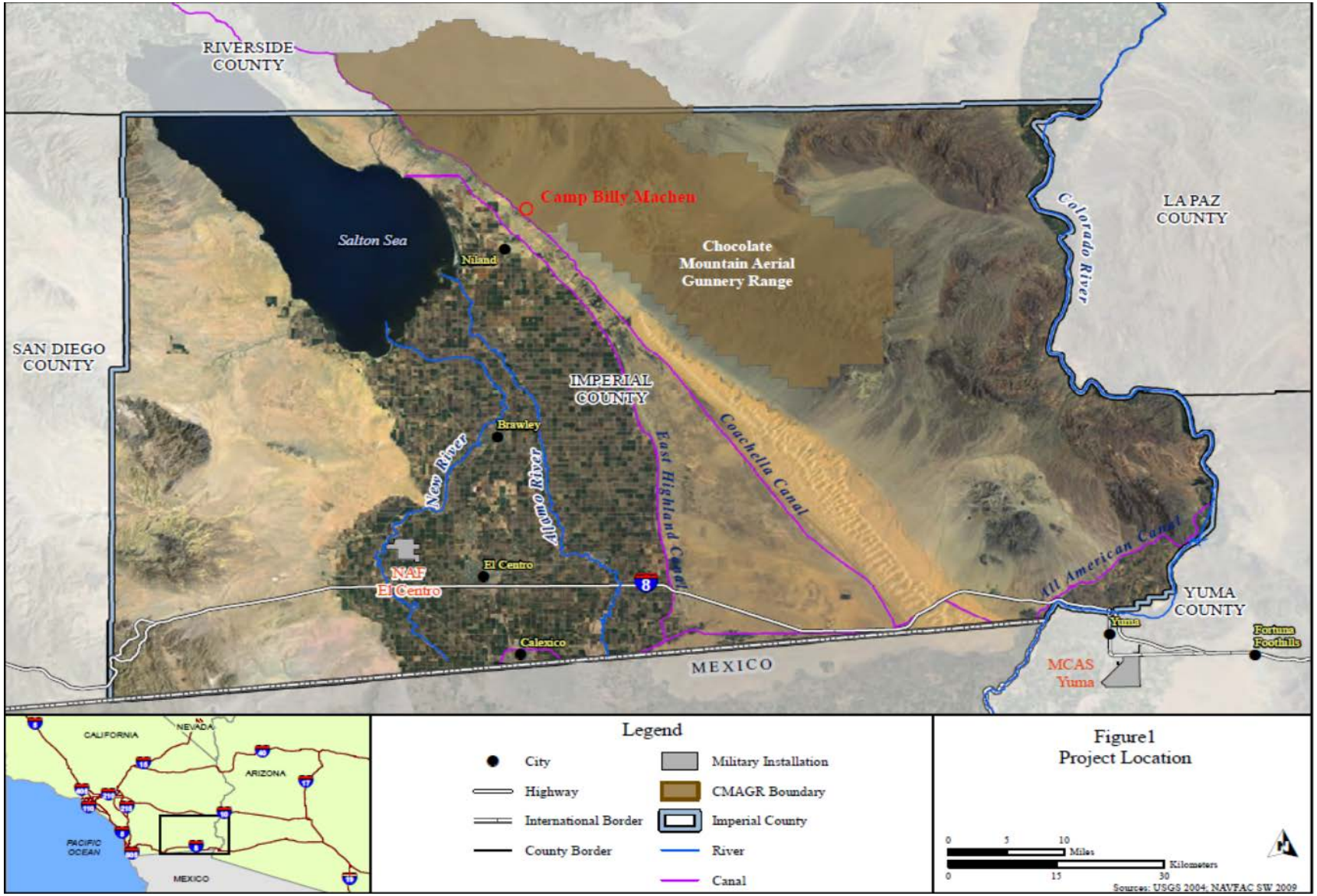

Figure 1.1. Project Location

1.3 Previous Environmental Documentation

Starting in 2011, the USMC prepared an EA that analyzed the potential environmental consequences resulting from two action alternatives (Alternatives 1 and 2) and a no-action alternative to implement the facility improvements.

The project would occur both within the existing cantonment area at Camp Billy Machen, and within an uninhabited area adjacent to the cantonment area. The total project area covers approximately 150 acres [ac] (61 hectares [ha]). Proposed improvements analyzed in the EA consist of the following seven actions:

1. Demolish an existing metal building at the entrance.
2. Construct a Desert Training Facility and associated site improvements (parking, landscaping, and stormwater management infrastructure).
3. Install utilities upgrades.
4. Construct a Materials Handling Facility.
5. Construct a Material Preparation Facility.
6. Construct either a paved or a semi-permeable access road to the Materials Handling Facility and Material Preparation Facility.
7. Integrate Anti-Terrorism/Force Protection measures to include fencing and area lighting into the design, development, and construction of the proposed facilities where necessary.

Actions 1 through 3 would occur within the existing cantonment area, Actions 4 and 5 within the uninhabited area, and Actions 6 and 7 in both areas. In addition, a temporary construction staging area would be located within the existing cantonment area. Based on the analysis presented in the EA, the USMC identified Alternative 2 as the Preferred Alternative.

In accordance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA), MCAS Yuma consulted with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife (USFWS) for potential impacts to the federally-listed Agassizi's Desert Tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*). On 29 February 2012, the USFWS concurred that the construction of new infrastructure facilities at Camp Billy Machen is not likely to adversely affect the desert tortoise (USMC 2012).

In accordance with consultation requirements under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), the USMC solicited input from 12 Native American tribes and consulted with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO). In a letter dated 28 November 2011, the SHPO concurred with the USMC's determination that the project would have no adverse effect on any known cultural resources eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) (USMC 2012).

The USMC also solicited input from the public on the Proposed Action and initiated a public participation process with the publication of a notice in two local newspapers: the Imperial Valley Press on 3, 4 and 5 February 2012; and the Adelante Valle on 3 February 2012. The 30 day public comment period was from 3 February to 5 March 2012. No comments were received. The EA was finalized, and the Commanding Officer of MCAS Yuma issued a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) in April 2012, which stated "the preferred alternative will have no significant impact on the human environment" (USMC 2012).

1.4 Incorporation by Reference

This supplement to the 2012 EA revises a portion of the original document presenting the Proposed Action, affected environment, environmental consequences, and avoidance and minimization measures. Accordingly, this section will refer to the 2012 EA, (which is hereby incorporated by reference) to avoid unnecessary duplication. This SEA only addresses the potential environmental effects associated with the upgrades to the existing overhead utility line, which were not included in the 2012 EA.

CHAPTER 2 – DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

2.1. Proposed Action (Alternative 1)

During the final design of the project and subsequent coordination with the Imperial Irrigation District (IID), it was determined that the existing circuitry providing electricity to Camp Billy Machen is insufficient to provide the additional capacity needed to support the infrastructure improvements proposed in the 2012 EA. The current circuitry is affixed to existing overhead electrical poles in an IID utility easement located on the west side of Cuff Road, which becomes Gas Line Road north of the East Highline Canal (Figure 2.1). To provide the additional capacity without affecting other IID customers, Camp Billy Machen would have to be de-coupled from Circuit P62 and an extension of the existing Circuit P63 would be constructed. This extension would start where Circuit P62 and Circuit P63 converge approximately 2.8 mi (4.5 km) due south of Camp Billy Machen along Circuit P62's pole line to the existing service entrance where IID provides distribution power to Camp Billy Machen (Figure 2.2). The extension would continue past the service entrance along the westerly Camp boundary and then east along the northerly Camp boundary. IID would then place a transformer on a concrete pad and connect to the meter section inside an existing electrical room at Camp Billy Machen, via an underground duct bank. The maximum length from the transformer to the meter is approximately 75 feet (ft) (22.9 meters [m]). The extension of Circuit P63 would be accomplished by using 397 aluminum cable. The weight of this cable would necessitate the installation of new wood poles, approximately 45-50 ft (13.7-15.2 m) high, at approximately 250 to 300-ft (76.2-91.4-m) intervals, rather than the existing 200-ft (60-m) intervals. New cross arms, insulators, down guys, and conductors would also be installed. Figure 2.3 is representative of the type of pole structure proposed. Circuit P62 would then be moved to the upper crossbars of the new poles and Circuit P63's cable would be strung along the lower crossbars, and the existing poles removed and the holes would be back-filled.

The actions proposed above would be performed by IID. IID intends to issue a Categorical Exemption under the California Environmental Quality Act[1], as no significant impacts are anticipated.

Operations and maintenance activities would be performed by IID and would include, but not necessarily be limited to, the following: monthly on-ground inspection of poles and lines, repair of pole components as needed, repair or replacement of lines as needed, and response to emergency situations (e.g., outages) as needed to restore power. The potential environmental impacts associated with these new actions are analyzed in Chapter 3 of this SEA.

2.2. No-Action Alternative (Alternative 2)

If the changes to the Proposed Action described above were not implemented, the existing electrical circuitry providing electricity to Camp Billy Machen would not be upgraded. As a result, facility upgrades at Camp Billy Machen would not be implemented. Camp Billy Machen would continue to operate in its current condition, lacking sufficient classrooms, instructional space, utilities and operational gear

[1] California Public Resources Code 21000-21177. CEQA Guidelines can be found in California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3, Sections 15000-15387.

storage for the current throughput of personnel. Improvements in logistics, training and special operations forces readiness would not be achieved.

Figure 2.1. Existing electrical utility corridor with single-circuit pole assembly

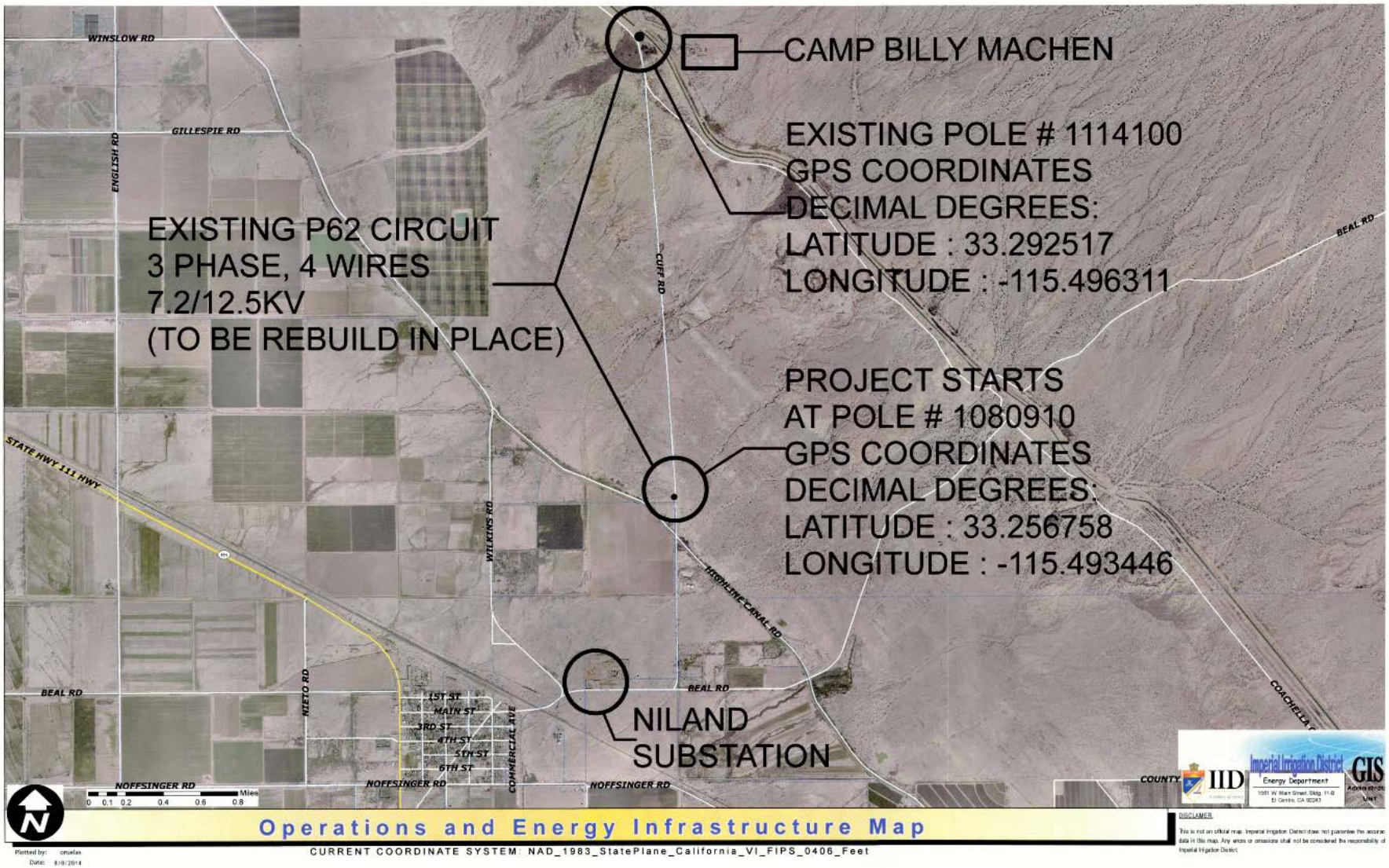

Figure 2.2. Revised Project Area.

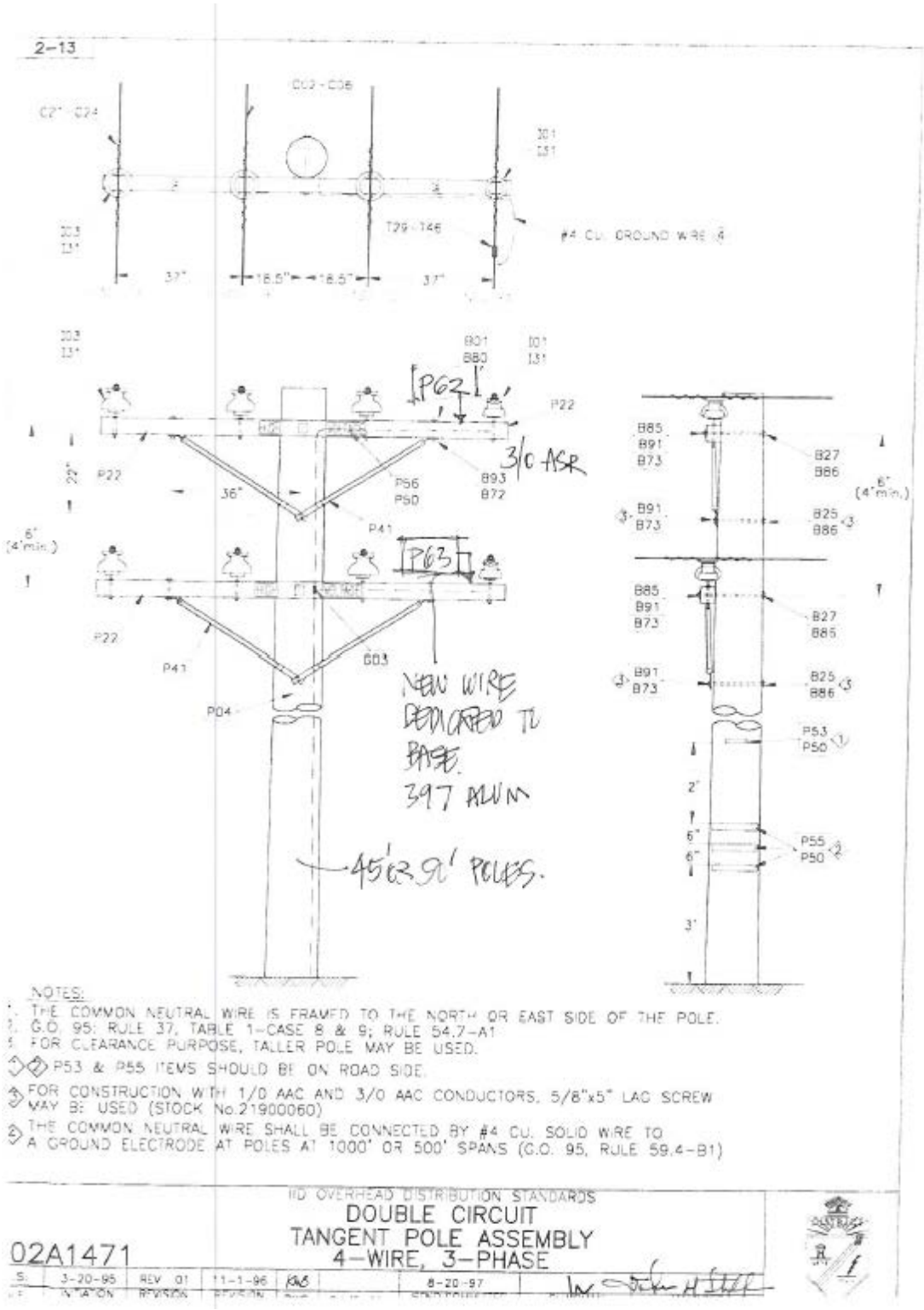

Figure 2.3. Proposed double-circuit pole assembly.

CHAPTER 3 – AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

This Supplement has been prepared to analyze the 2.8-mi (4.5-km) extension of the existing electrical power line that was not identified in the 2012 EA, as the need for this additional element was not known at the time.

Resources considered to not be affected by the upgrades to the Niland utility corridor are discussed below. These resources include land use, geology and soils, air quality, water resources, noise, transportation, hazardous materials and wastes, visual resources/aesthetics, public utilities, public health and safety, environmental justice/protection of children, and cumulative impacts. The only resources with the potential to be affected by upgrades to the Niland utility corridor include biological and cultural resources. These resources are addressed in Section 3.2.

3.1 Resources Eliminated from Detailed Analysis

Land Use – The extension of the electrical power line that feeds Camp Billy Machen is proposed in an existing utility corridor already zoned and managed for utilities. No changes to existing land use, general plan designations, or zoning are proposed.

Geology and Soils – The utility corridor is located in a region that could be subject to moderate to severe ground shaking in the event of a major earthquake along the San Andreas or Imperial fault zones. However, the utility extension would not expose people or structures to potential adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death. The corridor is predominately located on level ground that is not subject to topsoil erosion. Grading or excavation is not anticipated to result in unstable soil conditions.

Noise – The noise environment surrounding the utility corridor is associated with rural and undeveloped areas. Aside from noise associated with temporary construction associated with workers and materials along the utility corridor, there would be no change in the existing noise environment upon completion of the utility work.

Air Quality – Installation of the new transmission poles and power lines, and removal of existing poles would require excavation and grading activities, as well as the movement of equipment, construction vehicles and workers in unpaved areas along the utility corridor. The new poles and power lines would not emit any significant levels of pollutants during and after installation is complete. No new stationary sources would be generated, and no conflicts with the Imperial County Air Pollution Control District (ICAPCD) regulations are expected. Fugitive dust would be controlled during construction as required by ICAPCD, and a dust control plan would be prepared in conformance with ICAPCD requirements to address installation and excavation activities.

Temporary greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions would result from the movement of construction vehicles during installation of the utility line. These emissions are anticipated to be well below the Southern California Air Quality Management District threshold, and do not conflict with any applicable plan, policy or regulation of an agency adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of GHGs.

Water Resources – The utility line extension would not require the use of water, or result in the generation of wastewater. The work would not degrade water quality or violate any water quality standards. It would not require any groundwater withdrawal, nor alter existing drainage patterns. No adverse effects to hydrology or water quality would occur.

Transportation – The extension of the electrical power line would be located in an existing utility corridor on the west side of Gas Line Road, and would not conflict with the surrounding transportation system. Aside from a temporary increase in construction traffic associated with workers and materials being transported on-site, once installation of utilities is completed, it would not contribute to an increased demand on the transportation system.

Hazardous Materials and Wastes – The utility line extension would not involve the transport, use or disposal of any hazardous materials, nor involve the release of hazardous materials into the environment. No hazards to the public or environment would occur with the installation and operation of the utility line.

Visual Resources/Aesthetics – The utility corridor is described as topographically flat, undeveloped open space with sparse to nonexistent vegetation. The corridor is not located within an area that has been formally identified as a federal, state or county scenic vista. There are no identified scenic resources, historic buildings, or a designated federal scenic byway or state scenic highway in the near vicinity. There are no views of the corridor from a federal, state, county or city park, or other recognized public area for recreation, including trails. Installation of the utility poles may cause temporary visual impacts due to the presence of equipment, materials and workers. Installation would involve the use of heavy construction equipment, storage of materials on a temporary laydown/staging area which may be visible to travelers along Gas Line Road for a short period of time. Installation is not expected to take place at night. In the unlikely event that nighttime construction does occur, measures would be taken to minimize the off-site visibility of any lighting to the traveling public or the neighboring community. Once installed, the new poles and overhead power lines would be visible. However, the visual would appear similar to existing conditions, because the existing transmission line poles would be removed and holes back-filled, and the overhead lines would be re-strung onto the new poles. The project would have no visual impact to a scenic resource. Therefore, no significant visual degradation is anticipated.

Public Utilities – The installation of the utility poles would not create a demand for energy that exceeds existing conditions. The extension would primarily serve the increased demands at Camp Billy Machen as a result of the improvements identified in the Final EA.

Public Health and Safety – The installation of the utility poles would not restrict or result in any inadequate emergency access to any areas along the utility corridor. No safety hazards are anticipated as a result of the installation and operations of the utilities.

Environmental Justice and the Protection of Children – Executive Order (EO) 12898, *Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low Income Populations*, requires federal agencies to consider human health and environmental conditions in minority and low-income communities. EO 13045, *Protection of Children from Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks*, helps ensure that federal agencies' policies, programs, activities, and standards address environmental health and safety risks to children.

The definitions of minority and low-income populations in this Supplement are based on the 1997 CEQ guidance, and are considered applicable when a defined area's total population is 50 percent or more minority or low income (in this case, the community of Niland is considered the "defined area" of analysis). The general area is Imperial County. Low income is based on the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services poverty guidelines. For 2014, this was $23,850 for a family of four.

Minority populations comprise the majority of the population in Imperial County, with people of Hispanic or Latino origin comprising 80.4 percent of the total population. Niland has a Hispanic or Latino minority population greater than 50 percent (61.4 percent), but that minority population is less than the county as a whole. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2014), Niland experiences the greatest percentage of persons living below the poverty level of any of the surrounding communities (45.4 percent), and has a greater percentage of the population living below the poverty level than the county as a whole.

The electrical upgrades would occur in an existing utility corridor and would not have any effect on the current population demographics. Proposed improvements along the existing utility corridor would not result in a disproportionate impact to low income or minority populations, and would occur in an area where children are typically not present. Additionally, the improvements would occur in an existing utility corridor where children are not present and would therefore be no risk to the health and safety of children.

Cumulative Impacts – No resources would be significantly impacted by either the installation of new poles or the removal of the existing poles. Additionally, there are no resources found in the additional project area to be in poor or declining health or at risk, even if relatively small or less than significant impacts were to occur. When combined with other past, present or reasonably foreseeable projects within the vicinity of the revised project area, the installation of the utility poles would not result in cumulative impacts.

The following section presents a description of the environmental resources and baseline conditions that could be affected from implementing the improvements along the existing utility corridor. These resources include biological and cultural resources, and are discussed in detail below.

3.2 Resources Potentially Affected by the Proposed Action

3.2.1 Biological Resources

Regulatory Setting

The affected environment includes a discussion of the special-status species which are those species listed as threatened or endangered under the ESA, and species afforded federal protection under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA).

The ESA serves the purpose to conserve the ecosystem upon which threatened and endangered species depend and to conserve and recover listed species. Section 7 of the ESA requires action proponents to consult with the USFWS to ensure that their actions are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence

of federally listed threatened and endangered species, or result in the destruction of adverse modification of designated critical habitat.

Birds, both migratory and most native-resident bird species, are protected under the MBTA, and their conservation by Federal agencies is mandated by EO 13186 (Migratory Bird Conservation). The MBTA prohibits the taking, killing, or possessing of migratory birds unless permitted by regulation. In 2003, the National Defense Authorization Act was signed and gave the Secretary of the Interior authority to prescribe regulations to exempt the Armed Forces from the incidental taking of migratory birds during authorized military readiness activities. The final rule authorizing the Department of Defense (DoD) to take migratory birds in such cases include a requirement that the Armed Forces must cooperate with the USFWS to develop and implement conservation measures to minimize or mitigate adverse effects of activities.

Affected Environment

The utility corridor parallels Gas Line Road, which is an unpaved road owned and maintained by the County of Imperial. Gas Line Road is regularly graded and so vegetation along the corridor is sparse and highly disturbed. The road is flanked on either side by large earthen berms that are the result of excess soil being piled along the sides of the road during grading activities. These berms tend to channel flood water in the roadway during major rain events. The utility line is approximately 10 ft (3.1 m) from the roadway, and runs mainly on the west side of the road but crosses the road at the very northern section of the project as the road turns westerly. There is also an existing underground gas line between the roadway and the utility lines. Portions of the buried gas line are visible due to heavy erosion of soils.

Although no riparian habitat, wetlands or other sensitive communities occur within the utility corridor, the region does have an intricate system of drainage systems that are part of the Salton Sea watershed. The year-round availability of water and long growing season in the Imperial Valley have promoted and sustained aquatic, marsh, and riparian habitats in the valley, including the Imperial State Wildlife Area – Wister Unit and the East Highline Canal. Stormwater runoff, when it does occur, is minimal.

Environmental Consequences

<u>Proposed Action (Alternative 1)</u>
On 5 November 2014, biologists conducted a desert tortoise survey along the 2.8 mi (4.5 km) stretch of the utility corridor. The surveys encompassed an area from the berm at the edge of the roadway, to approximately 33 ft (10 m) to the west, within IID's utility easement.

No desert tortoises or tortoise sign were observed (Naval Facilities Engineering Command Southwest [NAVFACSW], 2014). The habitat is low-quality, heavily disturbed scrub habitat (creosote, *Ambrosia* sp.) with degraded vegetation cover and prevalence of introduced vegetation (e.g., tamarisk). Figure 3-1 below is representative of the characteristics of the landscape.

The absence of tortoise or tortoise sign at this site is consistent with results from the tortoise survey in support of the 2012 EA, which indicate an absence of tortoises in the Camp Billy Machen vicinity. Therefore, it is likely that this habitat does not support tortoises. In accordance with Section 7 of the ESA, a BA has been prepared and submitted to the USFWS requesting concurrence on the determination that the Proposed Action evaluated in this SEA is not likely to adversely affect desert tortoise.

No state-listed or other special-status species were observed, and therefore, it is anticipated that no impacts to such species would occur.

The utility upgrades would not affect any riparian habitat in the region. No impacts to any riparian habitats, wetlands or other sensitive communities from the installation or removal of the utility poles would occur.

Figure 3-1. Niland utility corridor, looking south.

No-Action Alternative (Alternative 2)
If the proposed upgrades to the Niland utility corridor were not implemented, no impacts to biological resources would occur.

Avoidance and Minimization Measures

Any potential for affecting desert tortoise would be minimized by establishing a construction window that would avoid any work during times when the desert tortoise is most active (1 March through 31 October). If a construction window is not practicable and construction is expected during part of the season when tortoises are most active, a qualified desert tortoise monitor would be on-site to ensure tortoise avoidance best management practices are employed. Other measures may be identified during consultation with the USFWS.

3.2.2 Cultural Resources

Regulatory Setting

Cultural resources are governed by other Federal laws and regulations, including the NHPA, Archeological and Historic Preservation Act, American Indian Religious Freedom Act, Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979, and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. Federal agencies' responsibility for protecting historic properties is defined primarily by sections 106 and 110 of the NHPA. Section 106 requires Federal agencies to take into account the effects of their undertakings on historic properties in accordance with 36 CFR § 800. Section 110 of the NHPA requires Federal agencies to establish—in conjunction with the Secretary of the Interior—historic preservation programs for the identification, evaluation, and protection of historic properties. Cultural resources also may be covered by state, local, and territorial laws.

Affected Environment

The affected environment for cultural resources is based on the establishment of the area of potential effects (APE) of an undertaking, through consultation with State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO). An APE is defined as "the geographic area or areas within which an undertaking may directly or indirectly cause changes in the character or use of historic properties, if any such properties exist" (36 CFR 800.16(d). The APE for this undertaking encompasses approximately 14,763 linear ft (4,500-m) of the utility line corridor, and approximately 25 ft (7.5 m) on either side of that utility line, for a total of approximately 16.5 ac (6.7 ha).

Three previously recorded archaeological sites are known to intersect the APE. One is a prehistoric habitation site, and the other two are the Coachella Canal and the East Highline Canal.

Environmental Consequences

Proposed Action (Alternative 1)
On 8 January 2015, archaeologists conducted a Class III pedestrian survey of the APE. The area is heavily disturbed from recreational vehicle use, and erosion from alluvial action, which has carved deep gullies along the margins of Gas Line Road (Figures 3-2 and 3-3). Portions of the buried gas line were visible due to heavy erosion of soils.

Two of the previously recorded archaeological sites and three new historical age isolated occurrences[2] were encountered during the intensive pedestrian survey (Dougherty and Brookmann, 2015). The two sites are the Coachella and East Highline canals, and the three isolated occurrences consist of a 1934 survey benchmark, a milk glass jar, and three fragments of a 1953 ceramic insulator. No artifacts or features from the previously recorded habitation site were observed in or near the APE.

As part of this SEA, and as documented in Appendix A, the USMC is consulting with federally-recognized Indian tribes to identify potential traditional cultural resources in the APE. The USMC would complete consultation with the tribes and SHPO before making a decision on the Proposed Action.

[2] Isolated occurrences are cultural remains or features that do not meet the definition of an archaeological site.

Figure 3-2. Example of recreational vehicle disturbance

Figure 3-3. Erosional gullies in the survey area

No Action Alternative (Alternative 2)
If the proposed upgrades to the Niland utility corridor were not implemented, no impacts to cultural resources would occur. No avoidance or minimization measures are proposed.

Avoidance and Minimization Measures

If previously undocumented cultural resources are discovered during any ground disturbance/excavation, all activity around the discovery would stop immediately. MCAS Yuma would manage these resources in accordance with the NHPA and other federal and state laws, USMC and DoD regulations and instructions, and DoD American Indian and Alaska Native Policy.

CHAPTER 4 – OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 Possible Conflicts Between the Proposed Action and the Objectives of Federal, State, Local and Regional Land Use Plans, Policies, and Controls

Implementation of the Proposed Action evaluated in this SEA would comply with all applicable federal, state, and local statutes, regulations, policies and programs. Additionally, the Proposed Action in this SEA would not alter the ability of those actions proposed in the 2012 EA from complying with all applicable federal, state, and local statutes, regulations, policies and programs.

4.2 Energy Requirements and Conservation Potential of Alternatives Including the Proposed Action and All Mitigation Measures Being Considered

Implementation of the Proposed Action evaluated in this SEA would support the incorporation of the energy conservation measures proposed in the 2012 EA.

4.3 Irreversible of Irretrievable Commitment of Natural or Finite Resources

Resources that are irreversibly or irretrievably committed to a project are those used on a long-term or permanent basis. This includes the use of non-renewable resources such as metal and fuel, and other natural or cultural resources. These resources are "irretrievable" when used for one project when another action could have used them for another purpose. Human labor is also an irretrievable resource. Another impact that falls under this category is the unavoidable destruction of natural resources that could limit the range of potential uses of that particular environment.

Under the Proposed Action, construction activities would require the use of limited amounts of materials typically associated with installing new utility poles and removing old poles within existing energized overhead power lines (e.g., wood, aluminum, steel, etc.). The use of construction vehicles would result in the consumption of additional limited amounts of fuel, oil, and lubricants. Due to the anticipated limited use of these resources, their use would not constitute a significant irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources.

4.4 Relationship Between Local Short-Term Use of the Human Environment and Maintenance and Enhancement of Long-Term Natural Resource Productivity

NEPA requires an analysis of the relationship between a project's short-term impacts on the environment and the effects that these impacts may have on the maintenance and enhancement of the long-term productivity of the affected environment. Impacts that narrow the range of beneficial uses of the environment are of particular concern. This refers to the possibility that choosing one development option reduces future flexibility in pursuing other options, or that designate a parcel of land or other resource to a certain use often eliminates the possibility of other uses at that site.

The Proposed Action would result in short-term effects primarily related to utility pole installation involving the use of vehicles and equipment specifically designed for such activities. The Proposed

Action would not result in a change in land use, reduce environmental productivity, permanently narrow the range of beneficial uses of the environment, or pose long-term risks to health, safety, or the welfare of the public.

CHAPTER 5 – AGENCIES AND PERSONNEL CONTACTED

Appendix A contains relevant correspondence conducted as part of this SEA. Agencies and personnel contacted in the course of preparing this SEA are as follows.

Federal and State Agencies

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ecological Services
- State Historic Preservation Office, California Department of Parks and Recreation

Tribal Governments

- Aqua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians
- Augustine Band of Cahuilla Mission Indians
- Cabazon Band of Mission Indians
- Cahuilla Band of Mission Indians
- Campo Kumeyaay Nation
- Chemehuevi Indian Tribe
- Cocopah Indian Tribe
- Fort Mojave Indian Tribe
- Fort Yuma Indian Reservation – Quechan Tribe
- Quechan Cultural Committee
- Tohono O'odham Nation
- Torres-Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians

Local Agencies/Organizations

- Imperial Irrigation District

CHAPTER 6 – LIST OF PREPARERS

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Marine Corps Air Station Yuma

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CHAPTER 7 – REFERENCES

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APPENDIX A

CORRESPONDENCE

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
MARINE CORPS AIR STATION YUMA
BOX 99100
YUMA, ARIZONA 85369-9100

5090
YRMD/KJ
February 24, 2015

XXXXX
XXXXX
XXXXX
XXXXX
XXXXX

Dear XXXXX:

Under the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) Section 106, and its implementing regulations Title 36, Code of Federal Regulations Part 800 (36 CFR 800), Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Yuma is requesting your input on cultural resources located in the area of potential effects (APE) for the proposed P-771 Camp Billy Machen (CBM) Utility Upgrade Corridor. MCAS Yuma, in cooperation with the Imperial Irrigation District (IID), proposes to increase the capacity of the electric line that supplies CBM and the P-771 facility, located on the Chocolate Mountain Aerial Gunnery Range (CMAGR).

In April 2012, the Commanding Officer of MCAS Yuma signed a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) based on the analyses in the Environmental Assessment (EA) for CBM and P-771 Improvements. During the final design phase of the project, and the subsequent coordination with the IID, it was determined that the existing electrical circuit could not supply the electric capacity proposed in the EA. To satisfy the additional needs for the CMAGR facilities, the IID proposes to replace a 2.8-mile (4.5-kilometer) stretch of existing electrical line with a higher capacity line using the same path. In addition to Section 106, MCAS Yuma will be analyzing the impacts of the proposed project by preparing a Supplemental EA.

MCAS Yuma contracted with Cardno, Inc. to perform a Class III intensive pedestrian survey of the project APE, which consists of a 4,500-meter long corridor that is 15 meters wide and covers 16.5 acres. The new poles for the proposed line will be emplaced via a truck that will be driven and parked on Gas Line Road, which runs parallel to the line. Once the extant electric line is hung on the new poles, the old poles will be removed from the ground and properly disposed of by IID. In addition to the existing IID pole line and Gas Line Road, an underground gas line runs the length of the APE.

Prior to the survey, a records search and literature review was conducted for the APE and the surrounding one-mile radius. The records search indicates that 10 surveys have been performed and 48 sites have been previously recorded within the search area. Three previously recorded sites are within the APE: CA-IMP-00068, CA-IMP-07835, and CA-IMP-07658/CA-RIV-05705.

The width of the APE is within the bounds of previously recorded prehistoric village site, CA-IMP-00068, for a distance of approximately 1,500 meters. Originally recorded and collected by Malcolm Rogers between 1920 and 1930, CA-IMP-00068 was updated by Stuart Peck in 1951, when it was noted that the site had been nearly destroyed. The other two sites within the APE, CA-IMP-07658/CA-RIV-05705 and CA-IMP-07835, the Coachella and East Highline canals respectively, intersect the APE on the north and south ends of the survey area.

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YRMD/KJ
February 24, 2015

The 16.5 acre survey was conducted on January 8, 2015 by way of a single transect centered on the extant pole line. The survey resulted in the recordation of no new sites and three historical age isolated occurrences (IOs): a survey benchmark, a milk glass jar, and a ceramic insulator. No evidence of the heavily damaged CA-IMP-00068 was noted during the survey. None of the IOs are considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places and none of the previously recorded sites will be affected by the proposed utility line replacement project.

Site Number	Description	NRHP Eligibility
CA-IMP-00068	Prehistoric village/habitation	Unknown
CA-IMP-07658/CA-RIV-05705	Coachella Canal	Unknown
CA-IMP-07835	East Highline Canal	Unknown

In accordance with California Office of Historic Preservation Detailed Recommendations for Section 106 Consultation Submittals, MCAS Yuma has completed a Class III survey of the APE for the proposed undertaking. Based on the results of the survey, MCAS Yuma respectfully requests that you provide us with any additional information that you wish to share at this time. We appreciate your input and thank you for your interest in our cultural resources program. If you have any comments concerning properties of traditional, religious, and cultural significance in the vicinity of the APE or questions regarding consultation on this proposed project, please contact Karla James, MCAS Yuma Archaeologist, at (928) 269-2288; karla.james@usmc.mil.

Respectfully,

WILLIAM R. SELLARS
By direction of the
Commanding Officer

Enclosure: Archaeological Survey Report of 16.5 Acres for the Proposed Utility Line Replacement Project near the CMAGR, Imperial County, California